

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

AID-20 INT-08 SCEM-02 COME-00 EB-11 TRSE-00 OMB-01

RSR-01 /132 W

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R 102131Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 845

INFO USCINCSO

CONFIDENTIAL CARACAS 6929

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: LUNCHEON FOR MIGUEL ANGEL BURELLI RIVAS AND SUPPORTERS

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

REF: CARACAS 6848 AND PREVIOUS

1. MY LATEST LUNCHEON FOR VENEVUELAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AND LEADING SUPPORTERS WAS FOR MIGUEL ANGEL BURELLI RIVAS AND FOUR TOP FIGURES OF THE AMALGAMATION OF INDEPENDENTS WHO SUPPORT HIS CANDIDACY. BURELLI, WHOSE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY WAS THE ELECTORAL PHENOMENON OF 1968 (THIRD PLACE WITH 22 PERCENT OF THE VOTE), IS HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, SUPREMELY ARTICULATE AND ADVISED BY A GROUP OF SKILLED PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE, BUT UNLESS LIGHTNING STRIKES HE CANNOT POSSIBLY REPEAT HIS PREVIOUS UNEXPECTED SUCCESS. HE IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST PHOTOGENIC, TV-WISE, OF ALL THE CANDIDATES, BUT LACKS MONEY FOR TV. HOWEVER, HIS POLITICAL INFORMATION IS OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST. FOR EXAMPLE:

A. COPEI OFFERED TO SUPPORT HIS CANDIDACY IF HE WOULD AGREE NOT TO BACK ANY PARTY OF THE OPPOSITION, FOR THE SAKE OF KEEPING AS MANY CANDIDATES AS POSSIBLE IN THE RUNNING.

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BURELLI SAID HE TURNED THE PROPOSAL DOWN. COMMENT:

URD REPORTEDLY ACCEPTED THIS ARRANGEMENT.

B. JOSE VICENTE RANGEL'S CAMPAIGN IS BENEFITTING FROM TEN MILLION BOLIVARS IN OUTSIDE FINANCING OF WHICH FIVE MILLION BOLIVARS IS FROM HIS OWN RESOURCES AND FIVE MILLION BOLIVARS IF FROM FIDEL CASTRO.

C. BURELLI, PRIOR TO ACCEPTING THE NOMINATION OF THE "ALIANZA DE ELECTORES INDEPENDIENTES", OFFERED TO THE DESARROLLISTAS' PEDRO TINOCO THAT TINOCO SUPPORT BURELLI THIS ELECTION, AND IN EXCHANGE BURELLI WOULD SUPPORT TINOCO IN 1978. TINOCO TURNED HIM DOWN.

D. A RECENT PRIZE FIGHT FEATURING FLYWEIGHT CHAMPION BOXER BETULIO IN MARACAIBO WAS LITERALLY TAKEN OVER BY COPEI'S LORENZO FERNANDEZ, WHO PACKED THE STADIUM WITH SUPPORTERS AND GRANDLY CLAIMED CREDIT FOR THE EAGERLY AWAITED BOUT. THE RESULTING IRRITATION OF THE CROWD BACKFIRED ON LORENZO, WHOSE CAMPAIGN HAS SUFFERED A SETBACK IN ZULIA AS A RESULT.

E. AD AFTER ITS INITIAL SUCCESSES, PARTICULARLY IN THE POLLS, IS NOW RUNNING SCARED AND RUNNING OUT OF MONEY.

COMMENT: WE KNEW OF AD'S MONEY PROBLEMS BUT WERE NOT AWARE THE PARTY IS RUNNING SCARED.

2. I REMARKED TO BURELLI RIVAS THAT THE COMMENT PUBLISHED YESTERDAY (CARACAS 6857) BY THE MINISTER OF MINES AND HYDROCARBONS ALLUDING TO A POSSIBLE NATIONALIZATION OF OUR U.S. PETROLEUM INVESTMENTS HAD NOT GONE UNNOTICED BY THIS EMBASSY. I ADDED THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER SHOULD IN AN ACT OF DESPERATION SEEK TO EXPROPRIATE OUR COMPANIES JUST BEFORE THE HEATING SEASON BEGAN IN THE UNITED STATES, THE REACTION THERE WOULD BE UNFAVORABLE. BURELLI RIVAS REPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT IT UNTHINKABLE THAT EVEN THE COPEI PARTY WOULD CONTEMPLATE SUCH A STEP. IN GENERAL, HIS ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION CORROBORATES THAT EXPRESSED IN PARA SEVEN OF CARACAS 6865 (LIMDIS) THAT NO MATTER HOW HIGH TEMPERATURES RUN DURING THE ELECTIONS, CALDERA AND CO. WILL NOT OVERSTEP THE OUTER LIMITS OF PRUDENCE. AS FOR EXPROPRIATION OF FOREIGN ASSETS IN VENEZUELA, BURELLI REPEATED WHAT HE SAID HE HAD TOLD THE PRESS RECENTLY, THAT "UNTIL THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT CAN EFFICIENTLY RUN EL TABLAZO AND FOMENTO AS WELL AS OTHER STATE ENTERPRISES, THERE IS NO POINT IN TALKING OF TRYING TO RUN OTHER FOREIGN-OPERATED ASSETS."

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3. COMMENT: OUR OVERALL IMPRESSION OF THE LUNCHEON WAS THAT BURELLI, AS WERE OTHER CANDIDATES, WAS PLEASED AT THE ATTENTION PAID HIM; THAT HE REALIZES THAT IN THE PRESENT YEAR THERE IS NO PROSPECT FOR HIS VICTORY; BUT THAT, AS IN THE CASE OF TINOCO, HE HOPES TO BUILD UP ENOUGH CREDIT IN THE POLITICAL BANK TO BE A REALLY STRONG CANDIDATE FIVE YEARS HENCE. HOWEVER, HE SAID FRANKLY THAT IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

NO ONE KNEW WHAT THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY WOULD DO IF (AS HE
SEEMED TO ANTICIPATE) EITHER OF THE PRINCIPAL PARTIES,
AD OR COPEI, FUMBLED IN THEIR MANAGEMENT OF THIS COUNTRY.
HE SAID BOTH PRINCIPAL PARTIES WERE LINING UP THEIR MILITARY
ADHERENTS WITH A VIEW TO AN EVENTUAL CONFRONTATION.
MCCLINTOCK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973CARACA06929
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS MCCLINTOCK
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730846/aaaabhc.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: CARACAS 6848 AND PREVIOUS
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24-Jan-2002 by willialc>; APPROVED <14 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LUNCHEON FOR MIGUEL ANGEL BURELLI RIVAS AND SUPPORTERS USCINCSO FOR POLAD
TAGS: PINT, VE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005